# **Lawmakers plan to convene hearing on Chevron oil releases in western Kern**

The Bakersfield Californian

September 3, 2019 Tuesday

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**Section:** BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL NEWS

**Length:** 514 words

**Byline:** John Cox, The Bakersfield Californian

**Body**

Sept. 03-- Sep. 3--State lawmakers will soon take up discussion of the large, uncontrolled ***oil*** releases that have recently drawn attention to Chevron Corp. operations in the Cymric ***Oil*** Field in western ***Kern*** County, legislative officials said Tuesday.

Staff to the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Water said it and the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources plan to convene a joint session on the leaks once the legislative session ends in a few weeks.

Chevron will likely be called to testify, staff said, as will officials from the state Division of ***Oil***, Gas and Geothermal Resources, or DOGGR, which is California's primary ***oil***-regulating agency. They noted that details on where and exactly when the hearing will take place have not been finalized.

The hearing preparations underscore the political significance of the "surface expressions" that since mid-May have brought more than 1.3 million gallons (31,000 barrels) of oily fluid to the surface near McKittrick.

Although state officials say the ***oil***-and-water mixture that has pooled at the site has done no harm to people or the environment, and Chevron is working to remove the fluid, the accident occurred at a highly sensitive time for an industry fighting for its survival.

Environmental activists driven by a sense of climate-change urgency have called for halting ***oil*** production in California. They have focused on allegations DOGGR officials are too cozy with the ***oil*** producers they regulate.

Accusing DOGGR of accelerating certain ***oil*** permits amid findings agency supervisors own ***oil*** stocks, environmental groups succeeded earlier this summer in persuading Gov. Gavin Newsom to fire the state's ***oil*** and gas supervisor, a title given to the ***oil*** agency's top official.

The Cymric leaks have sprung from at least three different locations, one of which DOGGR says has flowed at a low rate for more than a decade. Chevron and DOGGR continue to investigate what caused the releases.

News media as far away as the Bay Area have published or broadcast reports on the surface expressions. They have featured photos of a large amount of black fluid contained within a dry creek bed.

Surface expressions have occurred periodically in ***Kern*** County ***oil*** fields. They did not violate state law until new state regulations took effect April 1. Because of the ***oil*** releases, DOGGR has issued three notices of violation to Chevron.

DOGGR spokeswoman Teresa Schilling said by email Tuesday the agency is not aware of a scheduled hearing, but added that, "if invited we will attend." She declined to say what message DOGGR would try to convey at such a hearing.

A Chevron spokesman said more or less the same thing: "If a hearing is held, and Chevron is invited to participate," he wrote, "we will do so."

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**Load-Date:** September 5, 2019

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